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ABSTRACT

This practicum was designed to increase responsibility for completing and handing in homework among students in grades three, four, and five in a mid-Atlantic school district. Of a total of 128 students in these grades, 28 were identified to learn strategies to aid in completing homework. Nine solution strategies were employed: (1) provide students with an assignment book; (2) provide students with a homework organizer; (3) conduct parent workshops; (4) develop an after-school study program; (5) make homework assignments visually accessible to students; (6) assign a study buddy; (7) limit the amount of homework assigned; (8) teach study skill strategies; and (9) use assignment books and classroom newsletters as a means for parents and teachers to communicate. Analysis of grades and teacher comments revealed that all 28 students learned strategies to organize and complete homework. All identified students raised grades in at least one subject affected by lack of homework completion, and all received positive comments on their report cards. Parent involvement was increased through participation in parent workshops and follow-through at home on solution strategies designed for their children. (Appendixes include Study Club Performance Contract and Monitoring Schedule. Contains 23 references.) (Author/EV)

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Developing Responsibility for Completing and Handing in Daily Homework Assignments For Students in Grades Three, Four, and Five

by
Joan M. Shepard
Cluster 91

A Practicum I Report Presented to
the Ed.D Program in Child and Youth Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

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Abstract

Developing Responsibility for Completing and Handing in Daily Homework Assignments For Students in Grades Three, Four, and Five. Shepard, Joan M., 1999: Practicum Report, Nova Southeastern University, Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies. Homework Assignments/Responsibility/Elementary/Parents/Regular Education.

This practicum was designed to increase responsibility for completing and handing in homework for students in grades three, four, and five. Of a total of 128 students in grades three, four, and five, 28 students were identified to learn strategies to aid in completing homework. The successful application of learned strategies would be reflected in better grades and positive teacher comments. Parents involvement of the 28 identified students was to increase through attending parent workshops and learning strategies to help their children become responsible for completing homework.

The writer developed nine solution strategies to be applied to the problem. They were to (a) provide students with an assignment book, (b) provide students with a homework organizer, (c) conduct parent workshops, (d) develop an after school study program, (e) make visually accessible to students homework assignments, (f) assign a study buddy, (g) limit amount of homework assigned, (h) teach study skill strategies, and (i) use assignment books and classroom newsletters as a means for parents and teachers to communicate.

Analysis of the data revealed that all of the identified 28 students learned strategies to organize and complete homework. All identified students raised grades in at least one subject affected by lack of homework completion, and all identified students received positive comments on their report cards. Parent involvement was increased through participation in parent workshops and follow-through at home on solution strategies designed for their children.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Description of Community

The writer worked in a mid-Atlantic school district located near a metropolitan area with a total population of a half million people. The school district was composed of five municipalities, which included three boroughs and two townships, with a combined area of nearly 50 square miles. According to the 1990 U.S. Census, the five municipalities had a population of 39,225: 87.3% of whom were White and 12.7% of whom were from American Indian, Asian, Black, and Hispanic ethnic origins. The socioeconomic status of this community was represented by incomes ranging from $15,000 to over $100,00 with a per capita personal income of $25,614 (U.S. Dept. of Commerce, 1995).

Writer's Work Setting

The writer worked in a school district that had a student population of 6,500: 94% of whom were White, and 6% of whom were from American Indian, Asian, Black, and Hispanic ethnic origins, according to the 1998 school district enrollment report. The writer's school district was noted for its academic excellence. From the Class of 1998, 61% attended four-year colleges or universities, 15% attended two-year colleges, and 1% were in business, nursing or technical schools. Twelve advanced placement courses and 15 honors courses were offered at the high school. As well, there were classes for the learning disabled and the academically gifted on all levels (East Penn School District, 1998).

The writer's district employed 407 full-time professional positions and 250 support members. The teaching and administrative staff were 100% White. The school district had eight elementary schools, two junior high schools, and one high school. The eight elementary schools were comprised of two kindergarten through sixth grade buildings and six kindergarten through third grade buildings. The junior high schools were comprised of grades 7 through 9 and the high school was comprised of grades 10 through 12. Professional staff included eight central office administrators, 14 building principals and assistants, five speech correction teachers, one English as a Second Language teacher, 15 guidance counselors, five nurses, seven librarians, 28 special education teachers, seven instructional support teachers, 17 health and physical education teachers, 11 music teachers, 10 art teachers, and three psychologists.

The mission of the writer's school district stated that the district and the community would work as a team to teach students how to learn. Further, the mission stated that the district would be the leading district in its state in terms of responsibly establishing and achieving standards for academic excellence, and would be the local district of choice by parents, students, employers, and institutions of higher learning by the year 2002.

The grade structure of the writer's school district changed in September, 1998, due to an aggressive building program. Reorganization reconfigured the district to a kindergarten through fifth, sixth through eighth, and ninth through twelfth grade level structure. The writer's school was reorganized to a kindergarten through fifth grade level structure, with two classrooms of each grade level and one Severely Emotionally Disturbed classroom.

The writer's school building was located in one of five municipalities--this municipality having a population of 15,000. The writer's school building, built in 1914, was torn down and a new building built on its site. This caused the writer's school staff, students, and classrooms to be relocated for one year, while the new structure was built, to an existing elementary building located in another municipality of the district. Additionally, the writer served a kindergarten through second grade school building, located in yet another district municipality.

The writer's primary assignment was a school with 285 students, 12 classrooms, four male classroom teachers, eight female classroom teachers, seven specialists, and one female principal. Years of teaching experience ranged from 5 to 27 years and all teachers held a Master's Degree. The majority of teachers commuted from surrounding communities, with three living within the community. Student population was 285 boys and girls. Students were either bused or walked to and from school, and all students ate their lunch at school.

The writer's additional school had 132 students, four classrooms, four female classroom teachers, seven specialists, and one male principal. Years of teaching experience ranged from 10 to 21 years, and all teachers held a Master's Degree. Student population was comprised of 132 boys and girls. The school was located in a township six miles from the writer's other school and all teachers commuted from surrounding communities. All

students were bused to and from school, and all ate lunch at school.

The students in the writer's schools were educated in self-contained classrooms. The students were heterogeneously grouped for all subjects except math, where grouping was needs based and fluid, and determined by pre-tests at the beginning of the school year and chapter tests throughout the school year. The district used the Silver Burdett Ginn Reading series and the Addison Wesley Math series. Social Studies and Science were taught from a district curriculum. Spelling was taken from reading and content areas as well as from a list of core words, and taught in grades two through five. Daily Oral Language and writing were combined, with a writing reference book from D.C. Heath. Students participated in physical education, library, music, and art instruction for 40 minutes per week. Additionally, students who were experiencing reading and math difficulties, but who were not identified with a learning need, were instructed in a Title I reading program four times a week for one-half hour periods.

Title I reading services were not available to students who experienced reading and math difficulties in the writer's additional school, thus an instructional aide was available four days a week for identified students.

Writer's Role

The writer was an instructional support teacher who led a team of teachers in a collaborative effort to identify learning needs of students who were at risk of school failure. The mission of instructional support in the writer's schools was to foster success through cooperation and support. The writers was directly involved in designing strategies and interventions for the at risk students, and worked collaboratively with teachers, parents, and administrators to design and implement strategies for student success.

The Instructional Support Team was comprised of a team leader (the writer), three staff members, the principal, and parents of the referred students. The mission of instructional support was a relatively straightforward process of identifying the learning needs of students who were at risk of school failure, and providing them with the type of academic, behavioral, and/or social support needed to succeed in school. The intent of instructional support was to create a seamless system where no student suffered from the lack of support.

Students were referred to the Instructional Support Team by their classroom teachers, their parents, or any staff member. After a referral, the writer followed a preliminary screening process of checking grades, attendance records, achievement test results, disciplinary records, failure notices, and grade retention, to gain as much information as possible about the referred student. When a student was referred, the writer, in addition to the noted investigations, worked with the student to determine academic functioning in the classroom. Also, the writer had the school nurse check the student's hearing and vision, and talked with parents about the concerns.

The writer coordinated all meetings and prepared pre-meeting reports that were distributed to all team members prior to the initial meeting. The purpose for the pre-meeting report was to familiarize team members with the student's background as well as with the present educational and/or behavioral needs. This pre-meeting report facilitated the initial meeting where the problem was not admired, but rather, learning and/or behavioral goals were set, brainstorming took place, strategies were chosen, and an action plan was written.

The initial instructional support team meeting took place within a 30 minute time period, and included the writer, the referring teacher, team members, the principal, and parents. A learning goal was generated, and strategies that were chosen by the classroom teacher and the parent were written into an action plan and implemented for 30 days.

The writer was responsible for writing the action plan, distributing it to all appropriate people, and seeing that the strategies were implemented. After the 30 day period, the team reconvened, the success of the strategies were reviewed, and the action plan was redesigned, if needed. Future meetings were held, depending on the success of the implemented strategies.

If the strategies were not successful, the writer continued with student evaluations to determine if there was a discrepancy between ability and achievement, as well as to determine the student's rate of acquisition and retention of learned materials. If a discrepancy existed, and if a student did not show an acquisition and retention of materials, the writer referred the student to the school psychologist for further evaluations.

The writer worked with as many as 90 students throughout the school year.

Chapter II: Study of the Problem

Problem Statement

The problem solved in this practicum was students in grades three, four, and five did not complete and hand in homework assignments.

Problem Description

Students in grades three, four, and five did not show responsibility for completing and handing in daily homework assignments. Additionally, assignments were late or lost. Students claimed to their parents that they had no homework, and stated to their teachers that they forgot to bring assignments to school.

Problem Documentation

There were four pieces of evidence that supported the existence of the problem.

First, out of a total of 129 students in grades three, four, and five, there were 28 students who dropped one to two letter grades during the first marking period because they did not complete and hand in daily homework assignments. The writer gathered this evidence by looking at third, fourth, and fifth grade student report cards after the first marking period. Upon noting that a student dropped one or two letter grades, the writer questioned the classroom teacher as to the reason. It was thus determined that 28 students who did not complete and hand in assignments daily experienced a drop in one to two letter grades.

Second, out of a total of 129 students in grades three, four, and five, there were 28 students referred to the writer for instructional support because they did not show responsibility for completing and handing in daily homework assignments. When students dropped in letter grades, they were automatically referred to the writer for instructional support. It was thus determined that the 28 students who dropped in letter grades were also referred to instructional support for strategies to aid in homework completion.

Third, there were three parents out of the 28 identified students' parents who called the teacher and/or writer for suggestions. The parents were concerned with the drop in grades and expressed a need for support in helping their students bring home and complete assignments. Thus, the writer determined that parents expressed a concern for their child's drop in grades due to uncompleted homework .

The fourth piece of evidence showed that out of a total of 129 students in grades three, four, and five, 28 students permanent records revealed a history of homework neglect as reflected in teacher comments. The writer reviewed previous teacher comments of the 28 students and discovered that there was a pattern of concern by teachers about a lack of completing and handing in daily assignments.

Causative Analysis

There were nine causes for the problem that students in grades three, four, and five did not complete and hand in homework assignments daily.

The first cause was students lacked basic organizational and study skills. When the students were referred for instructional support because they did not complete and hand in homework, the writer questioned six teachers and found that students left school without their assignments, students could not find completed assignments, and students forget needed materials to complete assignments at home. The writer spoke with 17 parents of students who were referred to instructional support and confirmed what the teachers had stated--that children did not bring home assignments or could not find assignments in their book bags, did not bring home all needed materials to study and complete assignments, and did not remember what the assignments were and when they were due. Thus, the writer determined a need for students to learn organizational and study skills.

The second cause was student's parents did not know how to help their children study. The writer read three letters from parents who expressed exasperation because they did not know how to help their children study. Additionally, the writer spoke with 17 parents who attended instructional support team meetings and learned that these parents needed strategies to help their students with homework responsibilities. Thus, the writer determined a need for parents to learn strategies to help their children succeed in school.

A third cause was students went to a day care facility or babysitter before and after school. The writer checked the after school arrangements of the 28 identified students who were experiencing homework problems and learned that 11 students did not go home but went to a day care facility or to a babysitter. The writer spoke with the 11 students and found that they did not work on assignments while with a babysitter or at a day care facility. Thus, the writer determined that homework was not given a priority while students

were at a day care facility or a babysitter.

A fourth cause was students did not have after school supervision. The writer questioned the 28 identified students who did not complete their homework about after school activities, and learned that 17 students' parents were often not home due to a job or taking siblings to after school activities. The writer questioned the 17 parents of the students who did not complete homework about their children's after school activities and learned that the parents allowed their children to play or watch television until returning home from work or errands. Thus, the writer determined that students were left home after school without parental or adult supervision and therefore did not complete school assignments.

The fifth cause was students were given an average of two hours of collective homework a night by their teachers. The writer spoke with six teachers concerning the amount of homework given each day and learned that fifth grade teachers gave up to two hours of homework a night, and that fourth and third grade teachers gave an hour or more of homework a night. The writer spoke with 17 parents about the amount of homework given per day and learned that their children spent over two hours each night engaged in homework activities. The writer thus determined that two hours of homework a night appeared excessive for students in grades three, four, and five.

The sixth cause for students not completing and handing in homework assignments daily was that students were not clear about homework assignments. The writer investigated how assignments were given by asking six teachers and learned that (a) assignments were written on the board after each subject in two grades and students were responsible for writing the assignment down, (b) assignments were given orally after each class in one grade, and (c) assignments were written on the board at the end of the day in two classes for homeroom students and after math class for all students. Additionally, the writer spoke with the identified 28 students about how they remembered their homework assignments and learned that students used a variety of methods to remember assignments. The methods included (a) not writing assignments down and relying on memory, (b) writing assignments down on scraps of paper, (c) placing a book mark in the text book, (d) placing assignment papers in book bags, and (e) writing assignments down on a piece of

paper which was placed in a text book. Thus, the writer determined that students were not keeping track of their daily assignments in an organized manner and teachers were not making sure that students heard and saw assignments, which lead to unclear knowledge of assignments by students.

The seventh cause was parents lacked sufficient time to work with their children on homework habits and strategies. The writer spoke with 17 parents to determine the amount of time spent with their children on establishing good study habits. It was learned that parents did not spend time working with their children to establish good study habits. The writer spoke with the 28 identified students to determine if an adult helped them organize their homework time. Eight students reported that a parent asked them if they had homework, three students reported that a parent had them sit at the kitchen table to do their homework, and 17 students reported they had no help from a parent. Thus the writer determined that parents did not spend time with their students establishing good homework habits and strategies.

The eighth cause was students were not motivated to do homework. The writer spoke with 17 parents to determine student initiative. Parents reported that their children did not start homework without being repeatedly reminded, that their children did not bring home assignments, and that their children waited until the last minute to complete homework assignments. The writer spoke with six teachers about the relevance of assignments and found that homework assignments were given to complete unfinished classwork, to provide additional practice of taught materials, and to work on long-term assignments or projects. The writer thus determined that, although homework assignments were an extension of classwork, the students were not sufficiently motivated to do more work at home.

The ninth cause was teachers and parents were not communicating. The writer spoke with 17 parents to determine how they communicated with their child's teacher about homework, and found that parents did not discuss concerns until parent/teacher conferences, until after report cards were sent home, or until a failing grade report was sent home. The writer spoke with six teachers to determine how they communicated with parents concerning homework, and learned that comments were placed on students'

papers, grade reports were sent home quarterly with students, and phone calls were placed to parents. Additionally, the six teachers related that parents often did not respond to phone calls or notes. The writer thus determined that teachers and parents were not effectively communicating about homework assignments.

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

The writer conducted a review of the literature on homework and parenting topics to learn what others had written about homework completion and parent involvement in homework. The research provided evidence about the importance of the problem and documentation that the problem and its causes exist in other settings. Further, the research provided support for the evidence and causes as found in the writer's setting.

Current literature suggested that students did not show responsibility to complete homework. Anderson, Anderson, Gerretsen, & Robilotta (1997) found that students did not have a sense of ownership for their work, and did not have the basic rules needed to assume ownership. Further, students were unaware of a need for responsibility. Anderson, et al. reported in their study that (a) 36% of the 96 students surveyed for homework responsibility reported they sometimes finished work on time (b) 31% sometimes returned homework on time, and (c) 2% did not return homework at all on time. The literature suggested that responsibility must be actively taught through modeling and direct instruction.

Anderson, et al. (1997) also found parents agree that children do not show responsibility for completing homework. As well, parents do not know how to teach responsibility to their children and would rather leave the teaching of academic responsibility to teachers and care givers.

To further document student responsibility toward homework, Polloway, Epstein, & Foley (1992) found that research estimates 28% of students in general education classrooms have difficulty completing homework due to factors such as caring little about assignments, feeling boredom and resistance toward assignments, and receiving little or no help at home with assignments.

Parents need an effective approach to helping children succeed in school. Berkowitz (1996) suggested that if a child has a problem understanding an assignment, parents should

act as a coach rather than give the child the answer or do the work for him or her. In this role, the parent asks questions that will facilitate the child in locating the answer to the homework problem. By doing this, the child assumes the role of thinker and doer, thus learning to develop responsibility for completing homework.

Further, Anderson, et al. (1997) found that parents do not have enough time for their children. Single parent homes are increasing, both parents are working, and family members are holding more than one job. This limits the amount of time that a parent feels he or she has to devote to helping their child with school work.

Bryan & Sullivan-Burstein (1997) stated that the environment of the student over which teachers have no control is a cause for students not completing homework. After a teacher makes an assignment, students go to day care facilities or go home where there is no supervision. Therefore, homework completion is not guaranteed under these circumstances.

Literature to support the evidence found in the writer's setting that parents do not know how to help children study and that students lack home supervision is reported by Anderson, et al. (1997) and Pierce (1997). Summarizing their individual findings, the writer notes that parental involvement was limited by the lack of sufficient free time as well as not knowing how to instill responsibility for homework. As well, Polloway, et al. (1992) and Pierce collaborated the findings by the writer that students have difficulty in completing homework without parental support.

There is literature to support evidence found in the writer's setting that students were not sufficiently motivated to do homework assignments. Lack of student motivation to complete homework can be attributed to, according to Finney (1993), a finding that revealed 40% of parents across the country feel they are not devoting enough time to their children's education. As well, the National Commission on Children (1991) provided evidence that 72% of students ages 10 to 13 said they would like to communicate more with their parents in regard to schoolwork. Older children, ages 14 to 17, agreed with their younger counterparts.

Bronstein & Ginsburg (1993) noted that at times the type of family involvement can contribute to student motivation. Students whose parents are permissive and do not enforce

homework rules or have academic expectations for their children, have motivational problems in school. As well, parents who are authoritarian created resistance in some children to do homework.

Pierce (1997) also found that students were not motivated to complete homework. Pierce reported that, in her study of student participation and homework completion among 30 fifth-grade students, there was sufficient evidence that students lacked motivation to do homework. Pierce found through student surveys that 81% of students do spend time doing daily homework. Additionally, Pierce's study revealed that (a) 36% of the 30 students surveyed have no particular time to complete assignments, (b) 19% of the teachers surveyed feel that other activities take precedence over homework, and (c) 16% of teachers feel there is not enough parental support for homework completion.

Pierce (1997) also found that students' lack of motivation carried over into classroom discussions. Pierce found that, by tallying over a period of four weeks the number of times students raised their hands and volunteered to participate in small and large group discussions, students either do not participate at all or participate only part of the time.

Additionally, Pierce (1997) found that students prefer other activities over homework. When students were asked what they preferred to do upon arriving home from school, the consensus was that students would rather do almost anything other than homework, including cleaning, washing dishes, or reading. Pierce noted that 56% of the 30 fifth grade students surveyed spend more than one hour a day watching television, and one out of five students watch four hours of television daily.

In continuing her study on homework motivation, Pierce (1997) found that when material appears too hard for students and if it has no relevance, student motivation sharply declines, as would be expected. If homework assignments were not meaningful, were not relevant, or were beyond a student's instructional level, students quickly turn off to the learning experience.

In support of homework relevance, Begley (1998) suggested that homework in elementary school should foster a love of learning and hone study skills. According to Begley, more that 100 studies revealed that not until middle school did homework began to

show an effect on school grades. In an effort to discover why homework was not more useful in elementary school, Begley found that many elementary schools assign homework that is not relevant to the lessons taught. As well, Begley found that when homework gets piled on and students become frustrated, parents express negative attitudes that their children pick up and transfer toward homework completion. Thus, homework assignments that are short and engage the student in creative work, as opposed to long, tedious assignments that are pointless, aid in fostering a love for learning. Begley concluded that good foundations and attitudes toward homework should be fostered in elementary school, so when a student reaches middle school, routine and responsibility for school work is accompanied by positive attitudes.

Sufficient literature was available to support evidence in the writer's setting that students need basic organizational and study skills in order to complete homework. Bryan & Sullivan-Burstein (1997) found that students have difficulty completing homework due to a lack of basic study skills and independent work habits. Bryan & Sullivan (1995c) worked collaboratively for two years, as part of a program funded by the Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education, with a team of first through sixth grade general and special education teachers to design and field-test strategies to improve students' homework completion and study skills. They observed that homework problems are exacerbated by deficient basic study skills as well as lack of teacher, student, and parent communication.

Students need to learn time management and organizational skills for homework completion, since parents have insufficient free time to work with their children to change study habits, according to study conducted by Carrington, Lehrer, & Wittenstrom (1997). Working parents may not be home to supervise their children, or may be too busy with other concerns when they got home. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (1993) reported that 70.2% of single women with children ages 6 to 17 are employed, and 74.9% of married women with children ages 6 to 17 are employed. Additionally, certain parents who are disorganized in their approach to work tasks, or who are under stress, may be unsuitable helpers for their children. Therefore, parent involvement is not the answer for all children who need assistance with time management and organizational skills according to

Carrington, et al. Children who need to increase independence in handling responsibility for school work need strategies that do not include parent involvement, but, rather need strategies that can be applied directly to the child.

Stormont-Spurgin (1997) also found that students need to improve organizational skills. Students who are lacking routines in their daily and weekly schedules at school do not learn how to structure and organize their own time for work completion. As well, Stormont-Spurgin found that students who lack organizational skills do not complete assignments because they have lost or misplaced assignments and/or materials needed to complete homework. Stormont-Spurgin found a correlation between homework completion and organizational skills. When students with ADHD and without ADHD were asked to respond to a list of items on The Child Organizational Scale, they responded that (a) they have trouble finding school supplies, (b) they do not have a regular place to put their books upon arriving home from school, (c) they can not find completed homework assignments, (d) their family put things where they can't find them, (e) they lose things at school, and (f) they start projects but have a hard time finishing them. As would be expected, the children with diagnosed ADHD reported significantly greater organizational problems than those who were not diagnosed with ADHD. However, Stormont-Spurgin concluded that students who exhibit organizational problems, but who have not been diagnosed with ADHD, are as at-risk for homework neglect as are their counterparts who have been diagnosed.

A review of the literature revealed support for the evidence found in the writer's setting that teachers, students and parents are not communicating. Bryan & Sullivan (1995c) reported that teachers, students, and parents lack communication about homework assignments, missing assignments, and poor grades as a result of missing assignments. Additionally, Bryan & Sullivan-Burstein (1997) noted that students do homework in environments over which teachers have no control, such as day care facilities or homes without supervision, which often restrict effective communication between school and home.

Pierce (1997) found that children do not feel a sense of belonging in the classroom when they do not complete homework assignments, subsequently leading to an inability to

participate in classroom discussions concerning the assignments. This tends to have a negative reinforcement for attention-getting behaviors, which is perpetuated by a continuance of not completing homework assignments.

Pierce (1997) further noted that homework assignments should be made clear to students through a variety of teaching styles. Teachers as well as parents need to be aware of children's learning styles when developing instruction, in order to avoid the risk of working outside the students' preferred learning styles. Students who are asked to work in a learning style that is not their preferred style do not learn at their best and are often labeled as non-productive. This evidence from the literature supports evidence found in the writer's setting that students are not clear about homework assignments.

In summary, the review of the literature revealed support for the nine causes of the problem of homework completion as it existed in the writer's setting.

The scope of the writer's review was limited to homework problems and their causes, as well as parenting skills as they applied to homework. The writer reviewed journals, research projects, and on-line materials.

Chapter III: Anticipated Outcomes and Evaluation Instruments

Goals and Expectations

Students in grades three, four, and five will demonstrate responsibility for homework by completing and handing in daily homework assignments.

Expected Outcomes

The following outcomes were projected for this practicum:

1. Out of a total of 129 third, fourth, and fifth grade students, 100 % of the 28 identified students who dropped one to two letter grades for not completing homework will accurately complete and turn in homework daily to raise letter grades during the three months of this practicum implementation. The writer will deem the outcome successful when 100% of the 28 identified students show a one to two letter grade increase on report cards.
2. Out of a total of 129 third, fourth, and fifth grade students, 100% of the 28 identified students who were referred to instructional support for not completing and handing in homework daily will learn strategies to help complete and turn in homework daily during the three months of practicum implementation. The writer will deem the outcome successful when 100% of the 28 identified students demonstrate the use of homework strategies to complete and hand in homework daily.
3. Out of 129 third, fourth, and fifth grade students, parent involvement will increase from 3 to 15 for the 28 identified students who do not complete and hand in homework daily. The writer will deem the outcome successful when parent involvement increases from 3 to 15 parents.
4. Out of 129 third, fourth, and fifth grade students, 100% of the identified 28 students whose permanent records show a history of homework neglect will demonstrate responsibility for homework completion during the three months of practicum implementation. The writer will deem the outcome successful when 100% of the 28 identified students receive positive teacher comments concerning work habits on report cards.

Measurement of Outcomes

To measure the first outcome, the writer compared each of the 28 identified student's grades in at least two subject areas where grades were affected by the lack of homework completion before the practicum implementation began, and again after the practicum implementation was completed. The writer used a table to depict pre and post implementation grades so that grades could be compared. A summary statement of the results of the first outcome is included before the table.

To measure the second outcome, the writer used one table to depict what strategies the 28 students used to complete homework and another table to illustrate the frequency that completed homework was handed in. A summary statement of the results of the second outcome is included before the tables which show a relationship between implemented strategies and daily homework completion.

Success with parent involvement is shown through a table and summary statements which relate the success of the strategies. The table depicts six areas of parent involvement and the number of parents who participated in the strategies. The writer used narrative statements to discuss the increase in parent involvement.

The writer used a table to depict post intervention positive teacher comments for the identified 28 students.

Chapter IV: Solution Strategy

Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions

The problem to be solved in this practicum was students in grades three, four, and five were not completing and handing in homework assignments. Students in grades three, four, and five did not show responsibility for completing and handing in daily homework assignments. Additionally, assignments were late or lost, students stated to their parents that they had no homework, and reported to their teachers that they forgot to bring their assignments to school.

Solutions to the problem were generated as the writer reviewed the literature on homework and parenting strategies to help with homework completion. The writer gleaned seventeen possible solutions that could be used in the writer's setting.

Bryan & Sullivan-Burstein (1997) found that teachers sometimes underestimate the amount of time students need to complete homework, that assignments may be too difficult for some and too easy for others; or that there is little consistency in homework assignments from class to class in the same grade. In order to develop a consistent homework policy within a school from grade to grade, Bryan & Sullivan-Burstein suggested that teachers try to reach consensus about the length and frequency of assignments.

Many students need to learn study skills. Bryan & Sullivan-Burstein (1997) suggested that teachers teach some basic homework strategies to their students, such as (a) identifying a place and time to do homework, (b) having all the necessary materials, (c) placing completed homework in a place where it will be visible for remembering to bring back to school, and (d) reducing distractions at home such as television.

Parents should be made part of the homework process. Bryan & Sullivan-Burstein (1997), Canter (1988), and Popkin, Youngs, & Healy (1995) offered tips to parents for helping their children develop study skills. Bryan & Sullivan-Burstein suggested that parents reinforce their child's need for a specific homework time and schedule and agree on a specific place to do homework. Canter related that remembering to bring homework assignments back to school is an important responsibility for students to develop and parents can help with this responsibility by helping their child choose a special homework

drop spot to use daily. By choosing and daily using the drop spot, children develop the habit of always putting completed assignments in the same place each night. Canter also stated that to do homework successfully, a child must have a place in which to work. Parents should help their children choose a location at home in which homework will always be done. Popkin, et al. suggested that one of the main factors contributing to parents raising good students is a well-organized environment where parents are firmly in charge and where there are reasonable rules and realistic, clearly expressed expectations.

Peers can help students who have homework problems. Bryan & Sullivan-Burstein (1997) suggested that teachers encourage peer support by establishing study pairs or cooperative study groups. When student assignments are made, the study pairs or cooperative study groups can meet for a short time at the end of class to start assignments and ask any questions that are assignment related. Stormont-Spurgin (1997) suggested cooperative homework teams that call each other with reminders of homework assignments, the purpose being to increase the amount of homework students complete and return.

Independent learners need to develop self-monitoring skills. Pierce (1997) found teacher implementation of assignment books helpful in improving student homework practices. Assignment books require students to write the due date and the specifics of each assignment. Teachers should check and initial assignment books for completion and accuracy at the conclusion to the school. As well, parents should initial assignment books after assignments are completed. Bryan & Sullivan-Burstein (1997) reported that student use of a homework planner helps student organizational skills and provides a way to communicate with parents. Parents were asked to sign completed assignments and invited to send the teacher messages concerning how well their children did on the assignments, as well as any comments or questions regarding the assignments. Stormont-Spurgin (1997) suggested the use of assignment folders or day planners to teach students how to organize assignments by placing work to be completed on one side and completed work on the other side.

Bryan and Sullivan-Burstein (1997) found that when teachers assign homework that included fun activities, students are more motivated to complete the tasks. Using games

and activities that are fun not only motivate students to complete homework, but when coordinated with materials taught in the classroom, act as a reinforcement.

Bryan and Sullivan-Burstein (1997) further noted that effective assignments should be relevant to a students' life outside the classroom. Teachers should help students make a connection between what they learn in school and their lives outside of school. For example, students can keep track of money spent on groceries, estimate the amount of ingredients necessary to make a favorite food, or use the newspaper's TV listings to help students learn how to tell time. Relevant assignments help students make the connection that learning takes place everywhere. These activities also provide ways to involve family members in the student's homework.

Parents are more likely to be supportive of a teacher's efforts if they have a clear understanding of homework expectations and standards. Bryan & Sullivan-Burstein (1997) suggested that teachers, parents, and students develop efficient and effective communication regarding homework. Parents should be informed about the amount and approximate length of homework assigned their children. This can be done through teacher newsletters, parent/teacher conferences, or phone calls to parents. Stormont-Spurgin (1997) stated that classroom teachers should collaborate with parents to promote homework skills at home by signing and dating homework assignment books. As well, parents should sign and date completed homework. This collaboration will help teachers decide whether homework claimed by the student to be lost was actually completed at home.

Positive reinforcements can be implemented to reward students for bringing homework back to school (Stormont-Spurgin, 1997). In addition to praise, teachers should find out what students like to work for to determine what reinforcements to use. Such reinforcers can be edible reinforcers, activity reinforcers, and tangible reinforcers. The reinforcers should be given to students as soon as they turn in their homework. As well, reinforcements can be instituted at home for positive behaviors, such as bringing homework assignments home, completing homework assignments on time, and returning assignments to school. A collaboration between teacher and parent is suggested to coordinate rewards.

Children's education can be enhanced in afterschool programs (Beacons and

afterschool, 1997). Goals for students who participate in an afterschool homework program should be to help learn study and organizational skills and to develop responsibility for completing assignments. Teachers who are committed to helping students with homework tasks in an after school program can work with students on how to read directions and how to arrive at solutions and answers to homework problems.

Begley (1998) suggested that teachers give homework that is different than classwork, such as creative activities, rather than that of memorizing names, dates, and events. Some suggested creative activities include family oral histories, fictional letters expressing opinions and feelings, and art projects that culminate a unit of study. Begley emphasized that the assignments should be crucial to the next day's classwork, which will emphasize that homework matters and "isn't just a plot to make them miserable" (p.51).

Anderson, et al. (1997) suggested that students need to learn how to be organized and responsible for completing and turning in homework by developing good choices of how to use time, developing good listening skills, raising a hand when there is a question about an assignment, having all supplies necessary to complete assignments at home, checking completed work carefully, and completing homework on time.

Raffini (1993) suggested that students set homework goals. Students should be encouraged to generate realistic goals to help them gain independent learning skills. Goal setting allows students to participate in decision making regarding homework output, thus giving students a sense of ownership.

Teachers can use a variety of strategies to motivate students to complete homework. Gajria & Salend (1995), suggested that teachers vary the quantity and kind of assignments to keep student interest.

Pierce (1997) suggested that a strategy for homework completion to encourage skill proficiency is for teachers to assign work that students have a reasonable probability of finishing correctly. As well, students should not be given assignments that include new concepts because they may be attempting to use strategies they have not learned.

After reviewing the literature, the writer generated eight ideas for solutions to the problem of student homework completion. The solution ideas generated were (a) students could use assignment books to aid in developing organization skills and responsibility, (b)

parent workshops could be formed to provide parents with tips for helping their children with homework, (c) an after school study program could be developed to help students with study skills, organizational skills, and responsibility, (d) teachers could agree upon the amount and frequency of homework, (e) teachers could teach study skills to their students, (f) teachers could encourage cooperative homework teams, study buddies, and peer support, (g) teachers could make homework assignments relevant, not busywork, and (h) teachers and parents could develop a means of communication, such as homework hotlines, phone calls, and communication folders.

The writer critiqued each of the eight generated solution ideas from the perspective of the writer's work setting.

Assignment books as a possible solution strategy could be instituted to promote organization skills and one means of parent and teacher communication. Assignment books are easy to make and could be produced by duplicating 28 per month for each of the 28 identified students during implementation. Teachers and parents need to be committed to devoting time to daily checking and signing the assignment book.

Parent workshops as a possible solution to promote parenting skills could be formed to help children with homework and study habits. The writer, the guidance counselor, and members of the Instructional Support Team could work on a presentation to be held one evening a week for four weeks to which the parents of the 28 identified students are encouraged to attend. A provision for babysitting should be addressed for parents who need to bring children to the presentation. Additionally, planning time for the presenters and any expenses for materials should be considered. The possibility existed that all parents could not participate, but it seemed that the benefits of conducting such a workshop for parents who were able to attend outweighed not having a workshop if there was not 100% participation.

An after school study program as a possible solution to promote supervised homework for students who do not have home supervision or who go to after school day care could be developed by teachers in collaboration with parents. The after school study program would take a commitment from teachers who need to supervise the study program and parents who need to see that their children are picked up after the study program has

ended for the day. Consideration should be given to how many days a week the study program would be held, under what conditions a student would participate, how long a student should be involved, how many teachers would be needed to supervise the study program, and how the teachers would be assigned and compensated. An after school study program could offer intense organizational and study skills for students who are highly disorganized and who have been excessively truant in completing and handing in homework assignments.

Another solution strategy considered for use in the writer's setting was to have teachers reach an agreement as to assignment length, frequency, and amount. The third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers would need to meet with the writer to discuss current assignment practices and agree on a reasonable length of time per night they expect students to work on homework, as well as how many nights per week assignments are given. Assuming that teachers are able to reach an agreement on assignment length, at least for the implementation period, students would benefit by being able to complete assignments that are reasonable in length.

In instances where parents do not have sufficient time to help their children with homework, a solution strategy for teachers to teach study skills would help students gain independence and personal responsibility. Realizing that the teacher's day is filled with curriculum requirements, time to teach study skills would need to be taught in mini-lessons throughout the student day. If repeated often enough, students should pick up helpful study skills as they engage in learning.

Another possible solution strategy that would be beneficial to students in the writer's work setting is the formation of cooperative homework teams, assignment of study buddies, and enlistment of peer support to help students learn cooperation and responsibility. Teachers would need to assign teams, study buddies, or peer support groups and instruct the students on how to work cooperatively. This strategy would benefit all students, regardless of whether they had difficulty with homework completion.

Relevant homework assignments as a solution strategy was not considered by the writer as it implied a judgment on classroom practices. Teachers felt the homework that they assign was relevant, and since the writer did not find evidence otherwise, this solution

strategy was not considered.

A solution strategy that encourages communication between home and school could be developed to insure parent knowledge of homework assignments. Teachers need to develop a means of communication with parents about homework policy and invite parents to contact the school at any time with concerns or questions.

Description of Selected Solutions

The writer chose nine solution strategies because of their applicability to the causes of the problem and because they ensured the writer's practicum goal that students will demonstrate responsibility for homework by completing and handing in daily homework assignments.

The first solution strategy was to provide students with an assignment book to aid in homework organization and completion. The assignment book had one page a day and enough pages for one month. The assignment book had space for each academic subject as well as extra space for special notes. At the end of each line where assignments were written, a space was provided to check off the assignment when completed. At the bottom of the page was a space for parent signatures when assignments were completed as well as comments or questions that the parent wished to address to the teacher. The writer patterned the assignment book after one used by Pierce (1997) in her study of fifth grade students' responsibility for homework completion.

The assignment book strategy worked in the following manner. The 28 identified students completed the assignment book daily, checking out with their teachers at the end of the day. Students brought the assignment book, along with materials needed to complete assignments, to the teacher at the end of the day. The teacher checked the assignment book for accuracy and initialed it if the assignments were accurate. At home, the students' parents signed the assignment book when assignments were completed. Upon arriving at school the next day, students brought the completed work and the assignment book to the teacher for a check-in. If any assignments were missing, or if parent signatures were missing, students initiated a call to their parents explaining the situation, whereupon the teacher spoke with the parents to resolve the situation. This structure was closely followed for the duration of the practicum implementation.

The second selected solution strategy was to provide students with an organizer to be used for homework to be done and homework completed. This strategy aided in homework organization, completion, and study skills. The organizer was a folder with two pockets on the inside. The left side of the organizer was labeled "work to be completed" and the right side labeled "work completed". The student also kept his or her assignment book in one of the homework organizer's pockets. The homework organizer and assignment book were presented to the teacher for check-out after school and check-in each day.

The third selected solution strategy provided parents with strategies to help their children at home. The writer collaborated with the Instructional Support Team members on a parent workshop that was held one night a week for four weeks. The workshop was open to all parents in the school. To insure attendance of parents of the 28 identified students, the Instructional Support Team included the parent workshop as part of the students' action plans. Popkin, et al. (1995) developed a guide for parents to help their children success in school. The writer used this guide, along with material on parenting from Canter (1998), in developing and presenting four parent workshops.

The fourth solution strategy was an after school study program developed to provide students who attend a day care facility or who do not have home supervision with a means of homework supervision and guidance in homework organization and study skills. The after school study program was designed by the Instructional Support Team in collaboration with building teachers prior to implementation so that the study program would be operating during the second week of implementation. The writer had the support of the Instructional Support Team as well as the building teachers to establish a study program. Beacons and After School Education (1997) suggested ideas and strategies that help children develop a love of learning through participation in after school programs. Parent involvement was a vital part of the after school program. Parent approval of their child's participation was obtained and transportation home after the conclusion of the sessions was arranged.

As the fifth solution strategy, teachers had students' assignments visibly written on the board and on a homework sheet. This strategy insured students that assignments were

clear and accessible and therefore easy to write in assignment books. Since a cause for students not completing homework at home stems from lack of supervision after school, students need to have a clear understanding of what is expected of them when they get home to do assignments. When the assignments were written in a place that was visible to all students, transferring the assignment to an assignment book was more easily accomplished by the student. As well, the teacher kept a written record of each assignment, and had several copies duplicated at the end of the day for circulation around the class for students to use when checking assignment books for accuracy. This strategy was used with another strategy chosen by the writer, an assignment of study buddies.

Assigning a study buddy, as the sixth solution strategy, was implemented to help improve motivation and work habits of the 28 identified students. All students in grades three, four, and five were assigned study buddies for the purpose of pairing to check each other's assignment books, to use the duplicated daily assignments provided by teachers to check each other's assignment accuracy, and to be a resource at night by phoning one another if there was an assignment question.

Begley (1998) suggested that homework should consist of short assignments quickly completed. Bryan & Sullivan-Burstein (1997) suggested that length of assignments should be considered by teachers when assigning homework. As the seventh solution strategy, the third grade teachers gave no more than one-half hour homework assignments a night, the fourth grade teachers gave no more than 45 minutes of homework a night, and the fifth grade teachers gave no more than one hour of collective homework a night. As well, fifth grade teachers agreed to a no homework policy for Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, but students who had missing work were required to use the days before the start of the next week to complete and hand in any outstanding work.

The eighth solution strategy was to aid students whose parents lacked sufficient time to work with their children on homework habits and strategies. To accomplish this, teachers taught basic study skills strategies. Such strategies included having a time and place to do homework, having all necessary materials, limiting television watching, placing completed work in a safe spot, and remembering to bring completed work to school. Teachers also taught note taking skills and strategies to increase reading comprehension.

Using the assignment book as a means for parents and teachers to communicate about homework questions and concerns was the ninth solution strategy. As well, when teachers taught study skills, a short note was sent home about a study skill strategy discussed in school. A classroom newsletter was used by teachers to communicate with parents regarding homework policy, study skill strategies, homework tips, and invitations for parents to call or visit the classroom.

The relationship between the writer's solution strategies and projected outcomes showed that all selected solution strategies could be used to help students turn in homework daily and therefore raise grades. The selected solution strategies of assignment books, an after school study program, and parenting workshops encouraged parent involvement in their children's school success. All selected solution strategies were used to help students show responsibility for completing and handing in homework assignments.

Report of Action Taken

During the first week of implementation the Instructional Support Team met to discuss strategy solutions and write action plans for strategy implementation for each of the 28 identified students. Seven one half hour meetings per day for four days were scheduled and each meeting was attended by the parent or parents of the identified student, the classroom teacher of the identified student, the writer, the principal, and the guidance counselor. Classroom coverage was provided for the classroom teacher by hiring one substitute teacher who rotated between classrooms during the meetings. Students who would benefit from the after school study program were identified during the Instructional Support Team meetings and parent permission was secured. As well, arrangements were made for pick-up of students at the conclusion of the study program each day. The after school study program was named Study Club and participating students, their parents and classroom teachers, and the principal signed a contract of participation (see Appendix A).

At the conclusion of the Instructional Support Team meetings, the writer wrote action plans for each of the 28 identified students. The action plans contained the strategies to be used with the students during the implementation phase of the practicum. The action plans were distributed to the students' classroom teachers, their parents, and all other team members. During week six of the practicum implementation, the Instructional Support

Team reconvened to discuss the progress of the implemented strategies and to redesign any strategies that were not effective.

Assignment books were given to each of the identified students and classroom teachers explained and began check-in and check-out procedures. Parents who did not attend the Instructional Support Team meetings were called by the writer to explain their responsibility for checking and signing their children's assignment books. Additionally, the writer explained that any correspondence between the teacher and the parent could be written in the assignment book. It should be noted that assignment books were not purchased, but were designed by a teacher and duplicated by the school secretary. The assignment books were designed to last for one month, and each month's book had a seasonal cover. If a student lost or misplaced the assignment book, a new one was provided.

Homework organizers were given to each of the identified 28 students at the same time assignment books were distributed, and classroom teachers instructed students on how to organize work to be done and work that was completed. The homework organizers were brightly colored pocket folders, purchased with school monies. The left pocket was for work to be done and the right pocket was for work completed. The students were instructed to label each side of the folder accordingly.

In order not to draw excessive attention to the identified students, all students were given assignment books and homework organizers. Some of the unidentified students, however, chose not to use the assignment books since their method of homework organization was one that worked for them. As well, study buddies were assigned to all students, and all student in grades three, four, and five were exposed to assignments that were visually accessible on the board and on duplicated assignment sheets. Assignments were kept to a length of one hour or less. Additionally, teachers in third, fourth and fifth grade made a point to teach study skills to all students during the school day. They did so by giving instructions on copying homework assignments, tips for studying at home, reminders about taking all needed materials home and limiting television, and eliciting dialog among students about what students thought were good study skills.

The after school study program was organized by the writer during the first week of

implementation. The writer generated and distributed a schedule to teachers who would be monitoring the Study Club. Study Club met in a fifth grade teacher's room for one hour a day on Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday. One teacher from grades three, four, or five, was scheduled to monitor Study Club along with one member from the Instructional Support Team. For example, the writer, as a team member, was scheduled for a week, while a third, fourth, or fifth grade teacher was scheduled for one day per week. There were a total of six teachers and three Instructional Support Team members. Study Club began the second week of implementation and ran for eleven weeks. Each teacher monitored Study Club for a total of 5 days and each team member monitored Study Club a total of 11 days (see Appendix B).

Persons who monitored Study Club checked assignment books as students arrived to see if assignments were written down and initialed by the classroom teacher. Students were to leave their assignment books open on their desks at all times and all materials needed to complete assignments had to be with the student. Those monitoring Study Club gave assistance to students on how to approach assignments, guiding them through a thought process that led to assignment completion. Each day at the conclusion of Study Club, when parents picked up their children, the students showed the assignment book to the parent and indicated what homework had been completed and what homework, if any, needed to be completed at home.

During the second week of implementation, the writer collected baseline data for each of the identified 28 students. This data consisted of grades in one or two subject areas that were affected by not completing and turning in homework assignments, as well as a tally of parent participation in the preceding week's Instructional Support Team meetings. The writer also spoke with the involved classroom teachers about the workability of the assignment books, homework organizers, study buddies, check-in and check-out, and assignment completion. This inquiry continued throughout the practicum implementation.

Also, during the second week of implementation, the writer met with the Instructional Support Team to work on parent workshop presentations. Dates for the four nights were decided upon and presenters from the team were selected. It was decided that each team member would present one night and all three team members would present the

last night of the parent workshops. It was also decided that all team members would be present each night to add support to the presenting team member and to be available to answer questions after the session. The week following the planning, flyers were sent home to all students in kindergarten through fifth grade, announcing the parent workshops, which ran for four consecutive Wednesday evenings from 7:00 to 8:30. The parent workshop began during the fourth week of practicum implementation and ran smoothly for four weeks.

The writer was busiest during the first month of practicum implementation with organizational activities and monitoring the start up of the implementation of strategies. The remainder of the practicum flowed smoothly without any roadblocks or difficulties.

The writer assumed a leadership role during the implementation by (a) leading Instructional Support Team meetings, (b) working collaboratively with teachers, parents, and students to implement solution strategies, (c) organizing and collaborating with teachers the parenting workshops, (d) organizing and collaborating with teachers an after school study program, and (e) gathering data on students to determine if solution strategies are successful.

Permission to conduct this practicum was obtained from the writer's principal. As the instructional leader, the principal budgeted necessary materials and supplies for the assignment books, homework organizers, and parenting workshops. Cooperation from the teachers involved in solution implementation was an outgrowth of the Instructional Support Team, which operates in an atmosphere of collaboration among administrators, teachers, parents, and students.

Chapter V: Results

Results

The problem to be solved in this practicum was students in grades three, four, and five were not completing and handing in homework assignments. Assignments were late or lost, students stated to their parents that they had no homework, and reported to their teachers they forgot to bring their assignments to school. Twenty-eight students were identified as having a need for strategies to help with homework completion. Nine solution strategies were generated by the writer after a careful review of the literature. The solution strategies implemented during the twelve week practicum were to: (a) provide students with an assignment book, (b) provide students with a homework organizer, (c) conduct parent workshops on strategies to help their children with homework, (d) develop an after school study program for students who attended a day care facility or who did not have home supervision, (e) write homework assignments in the classrooms where they were visually accessible, as well as provide duplicated homework assignment sheets at the end of each day, (f) assign a study buddy, (g) limit homework to one half hour in third grade, forty-five minutes in fourth grade, and one hour in fifth grade, (h) teach study skill strategies, and (i) use assignment books and classroom newsletters as a means for parents and teaches to communicate.

The goal for this practicum was students in grades three, four, and five will demonstrate responsibility for homework by completing and handing in daily homework assignments.

The following outcomes were projected for this practicum:

1. Out of a total of 129 third, fourth, and fifth grade students, 100% of the 28 identified students who dropped one to two letter grades for not completing homework will accurately complete and turn in homework daily to raise letter grades during the three months of practicum implementation.The writer will deem the outcome successful when 100% of the 28 identified students show a one to two letter grade increase on report cards.

This outcome was met.

Of the 28 identified students, 100% increased grades in one of the identified

subjects that was affected by not completing and turning in homework assignments. Of the 28 identified students, 23 students increased grades in two subjects and five students received the same grade in one of two identified subjects that was affected by lack of homework completion. None of the 28 identified students' grades dropped in any of the identified subjects that were affected by not turning in homework (see Table 1).

Table 1

Student Grades in Subjects Where Homework Was Not Completed

	Pre Interventions		Post Interventions	
Student	Subject 1	Subject 2	Subject 1	Subject 2
1	C	D	A	B
2	B	C	A	B
3	D	C	B	B
4	D	C	C	C
5	D	B	B	B
6	C		B	
7	D		B	
8	D	C	C	B
9	C	C	B	B
10	D	D	C	B
11	C		B	
12	D	D	C	C
13	C	C	B	B
14	C	C	B	C
15	C	C	B	A
16	B	C	B	B
17	C		B	
18	D	C	C	A
19	C		A	
20	B	C	B	B
21	D	D	C	C
22	C	D	B	B
23	B	B	A	B
24	C		B	
25	C	C	B	A
26	D	F	C	C

27	C	C	B	C
28	D	B	B	A

Note. Student 5 moved during the tenth week of implementation and Student 20 moved during the eleventh week of implementation. The grades for these two students were averaged at the time they moved.

2. Out of a total of 129 third, fourth, and fifth grade students, 100% of the 28 identified students who were referred to instructional support for not completing and handing in homework daily will learn strategies to help complete and turn in homework daily during the three months of practicum implementation. The writer will deem the outcome successful when 100% of the 28 identified students demonstrate the use of homework strategies to complete and hand in homework daily.

This outcome was met.

Of the identified 28 students who did not complete and hand in homework daily, 100% used the assignment book, homework organizer, and study skills as strategies to complete and hand in homework daily. Of the identified 28 students who did not complete and hand in homework daily, 8 students participated in Study Club. Additionally, 17 students used a study buddy, 13 students copied assignments from the board, and 15 students preferred using the duplicated assignment sheet (see Table 2).

Table 2

Homework Strategies Used by Students

Strategy	Number of Students
Assignment Book	28
Homework Organizer	28
Study Skills	28
Study Club	8
Study Buddy	17
Homework Copied From Board	13
Homework Copied From Duplicated Homework Assignment Sheet	15

Additionally, 100% of the 28 identified students completed and handed in homework daily. An examination of Table 3 shows that 17 of the 28 identified students turned in assignments on time, 7 of the 28 identified students were late with assignments one time, and 4 of the 28 identified students were late with assignments two or more times. However, the assignments that were not turned in on time were turned in by the close of the school day. None of the students who participated in Study Club turned in late assignments.

Table 3

Frequency of Homework Handed in By Students

Activity	Number of Students
Daily on Time	17
Daily But Late One Time	7
Daily But Late Two or More Times	4

Note. The 8 Study Club participants are included among the 17 students who turned in homework daily and on time.

3. Out of 129 third, fourth, and fifth grade students, parent involvement will increase from 3 to 15 for the 28 identified students who do not complete and hand in homework daily. The writer will deem the outcome successful when parent involvement increases from 3 to 15 parents.

This outcome was met.

As seen in Table 4, of the parents of the 28 identified students, 100% signed the assignment books. Thirteen of the 28 parents of identified students attended the parent workshops. Twelve out of 28 parents thought that Study Club was a good idea, but only 8 parents could make arrangements to pick up their children after Study Club. Twenty-one parents attended the first Instructional Support Team meeting and 15 parents attended the follow-up Instructional Support Team meeting during week seven of implementation.

Table 4

Parent Involvement

Activity	Number of Parents Involved
Sign Homework Book	28
Attend Parent Workshops	13
Support Study Club	12
Participate in Study Club	8
Attend First Team Meeting	21
Attend Second Team Meeting	15

4. Out of 129 third, fourth, and fifth grade students, 100% of the identified 28 students whose permanent records show a history of homework neglect will demonstrate responsibility for homework completion during the three months of practicum implementation. The writer will deem the outcome successful when 100% of the 28 identified students receive positive teacher comments concerning work habits on report cards.

This outcome was met.

Of the identified 28 students, 100% received positive teacher comments concerning work habits on report cards (see Table 5).

Table 5

Post Intervention Positive Comments on Report Cards

Student	Comment
1	Completes homework on time.
2	Prepares assignments well.
3	Organizational skills improved.
4	Group work habits improved.
5	Shows interest and enthusiasm in Social Studies.
6	Follows directions accurately in Math.
7	Maintains consistent work quality.
8	Completes homework on time.
9	Learns facts in math.
10	Shows improvement in spelling.
11	Prepares assignments well.
12	Completes homework on time.
13	Shows improvement in reading.
14	Participates in class activities.
15	Proofreading and editing skills improved.
16	Exhibits good work and study habits.
17	Follows directions accurately in reading.
18	Prepares assignments in math.
19	Shows improvement in reading.
20	Group work habits improved.
21	Completes homework on time.
22	Maintains consistent work quality.
23	Completes homework on time.
24	Exhibits good work and study habits
25	Maintains consistent work quality.
26	Completes homework on time.
27	Organizational skills improved.

Discussion

Homework has been part of United States education systems since the beginning of the century. Teachers depend on homework to provide extended practice, to complete unfinished classwork, and to keep parents informed about their children's progress (Polloway, Epstein, Bursuck, Jayanthi, & Cumbald, 1994). Both teachers and parents believe that doing homework helps students develop responsibility and personal management skills. However, all too often parents see homework as a struggle between them and their children and teachers see assigning, collecting, and evaluating homework as the least enjoyable part of their job (Bryan & Sullivan-Burstein, 1997).

This practicum was developed to address the issues of student responsibility for completing and handing in homework and time management and organization leading toward life long good habits. The writer believes that the strategies developed had an impact upon students, teachers, and parents of those who participated. Students raised letter grades, parents learned how to help their children complete homework, teachers gained more control over their time involving homework, and teachers and parents worked in a collaborative manner to develop communication between home and school.

All strategies worked together to accomplish the goal of this practicum, but some strategies appear to have had more impact than others. The results indicate that the strategies proven to be most effective in promoting homework responsibility and ultimately raising grades were assignment books with daily check-in and check-out, homework organizers, and Study Club. Additionally, results indicate that parent involvement increased the most through checking their children's assignment books and communication with the teacher in the assignment book.

The results show that students using assignment books with daily check-in and check-out, and homework organizers became organized through this highly structured strategy. To establish this routine, teachers needed to spend time daily for the first two weeks of implementation to remind students to copy all assignments, to place work to be done along with assignment book in the homework folder, and to take all necessary materials home. The check-in and check-out routine took additional teacher time in the

mornings, but became more manageable as weeks went by. Dismissal time was more hectic than arrival time, since many of the identified students are bussed to school. To accommodate for this needed extra time, teachers began the dismissal routine ten minutes earlier. Additionally, as an outgrowth of this need, the last 20 minutes of school was designated as a reading time for all students in kindergarten through fifth grade. Thus, students who did not participate in check-in and check-out readied themselves for dismissal and read until it was time to leave. Students who participated in check-in and check-out went through their routine and then participated in the reading time. The assignment book and check-in and check-out strategy has continued beyond the duration of the practicum implementation.

Teachers in grades one and two also began using the homework book strategy and the kindergarten teacher has expressed an interest in doing so next year. Assignment books adopted by first and second grade teachers are called home books and are used mainly to communicate with parents on a daily or a weekly basis.

Parents need to be involved in their children's education, and the results of this practicum indicate an increase in parent involvement in the homework process. Parent workshops were successful; although only 13 of the 28 identified students' parents participated. As is usually the case, those parents who attended were parents who needed the information the least. The parents of the identified students who did attend expressed to presenters that the information was helpful and that they were using several of the suggestions. The suggestions that parents liked and used the most was that of having a designated drop spot for their children's homework as well as a designated time and place for their children to do homework. Parents reported to the writer that this routine, once established, made life easier for both parent and child, since expectations were clear and few deviations from the routine occurred. In addition to such tips as designating a homework drop spot and establishing a routine to work on homework, parents were given suggestions for what to do when (a) children don't do their best work because they rush through homework in order to play or watch TV, (b) children refuse to do homework assignments or lie about having homework, (c) children fail to bring assignments home, (d) children take all night to do homework, (e) children wait until the last minute to finish

assignments, and (f) children will not do homework when parents are not home. This information was gleaned from Canter's (1988) work and a handout containing this information was developed by the writer and members of the Instructional Support Team to give to parents at future team meetings when homework is a concern.

An unanticipated outcome of the parent workshops is that the writer and the presenters have been asked to conduct similar parent workshops during the following school year and open enrollment to all parents throughout the district. A suggestion to provide babysitting for those parents who could not attend due to lack of child care was explored by team members. It was decided to approach the Parent/Teacher Organization to see if they would be willing to arrange child care provisions for future workshops. As well, it was suggested by district administrators that parent workshops be presented as part of the district's community adult education.

Parent involvement increased when it came to signing homework assignment books and using the assignment books to communicate with the teacher through written messages. Results indicate that parents took time nightly to check completed assignments and sign assignment books. Teachers related to the writer that parents wrote such notes as, "It took longer than we thought it should have to complete this work," or "(Name) didn't seem to understand this math concept," or "Thank you for your help." An interesting outgrowth of this increased communication between home and school, as reported to the writer by teachers, was during parent/teacher conferences--which occurred during week 11 of practicum implementation-- parents of the identified students were more informed about their children's progress, took pride in the fact that they contributed to their children's achievement, and were more at ease with the teacher.

The results indicate that the after school study program, Study Club, was an extremely helpful activity for students who participated. Because Study Club was a highly structured activity, student organizational and study skills greatly improved. It was unfortunate that more students were not able to participate, but since parent involvement was key to this activity, only eight students were involved. Parents, or a designee, needed to be available to pick up their children at the conclusion of Study Club each day. Since this was a successful strategy, it will be used next school year and avenues such as car pooling

among parents will be explored to increase student participation. Since Study Club ran for only 11 weeks, all 8 students remained for the entire time. The writer anticipates that, when Study Club is begun at the beginning of the next school year, students who participate will do so for only as long as needed. It is not likely that a student will need to participate for an entire school year. The writer found it interesting that students other than those identified wanted to participate in Study Club. As well, teachers are asking if Study Club will be continued next year.

Scheduling of teachers to monitor Study Club, although set before Study Club was implemented, became a problem at times, when scheduled teachers were absent or had to leave school unexpectedly. The Instructional Support Team members covered for any teacher that could not be there, and often the absent teacher volunteered to make up his or her time. Scheduling for a year could result in similar circumstances, and teachers may not be as willing to make up lost time, which would put an undue burden on the Instructional Support Team members. The writer will approach this concern next year during a faculty meeting to explore all options for scheduling Study Club monitors.

Study skills were taught by teachers in third, fourth, and fifth grade, and results of this instruction indicate that students, teachers, and parents benefited. Teachers reported to the writer that they talked about strategies almost daily, not as a scheduled activity, but as an integral part of teaching content. Study skill strategies discussed were (a) writing assignments accurately in assignment books, (b) gathering all materials needed to complete homework, (c) note taking, (d) organizational skills, such as what to do first, second, and last, (e) using the homework folder to develop organization, (f) following directions, (g) working with a study buddy to prepare for tests, discuss homework assignments and double check assignments, and (h) limiting television. Additionally, teachers added homework tips to classroom newsletters and parents reported to both teachers and the writer that these were helpful as reinforcers at home. Four teachers have expressed an interest in developing a classroom web page to be accessed by students and parents at home, which will contain homework assignments and child friendly links to learning activities on the web.

Teachers in third, fourth, and fifth grade who supplemented written assignments on

the board with a sheet upon which assignments were duplicated were pleased that all students used both sources to copy and check the accuracy of homework assignments. The results of this strategy indicate that students became more responsible for writing assignments in assignment books because they had the option of copying from the board or from the duplicated copy. More students seemed to prefer copying from the duplicated copy of assignments than from the board. When asked why they preferred copying from an assignment sheet over copying from the board, students answered that they could work with their study buddy while copying assignments for an assignment sheet, but copying from the board was a solitary task. When students collaborated with their study buddies while writing assignments, they worked together to check the accuracy of assignments, to discuss projects, and to quiz each other on math facts or spelling words. The pairing together of study buddies in cooperative groups aided the students in learning how to work together. Bryan and Sullivan-Burstein (1997) suggested that peers are a potent source of child influence, and their mutual support is often overlooked. The writer found this to be true during practicum implementation.

Limiting homework assignments so that they could be completed in one half hour for third grade students, forty-five minutes for fourth grade students, and one hour for fifth grade students appeared not to be a problem for teachers or students, as results of these time limits indicate that homework was completed by students within the limits. Parents reported to the writer that they were pleased homework was not piled on, and that their children began to see homework as a necessary activity rather than a chore.

During this practicum implementation three of the identified students were referred to the Multiple Disciplinary Team for screening for exceptionalities. One student was referred for an attention deficit disorder evaluation and two were referred for learning disabilities evaluations. The evaluations have not been completed at the writing of this report, but the strategies implemented in this practicum will be used to determine if these students can succeed with interventions.

In conclusion, the writer feels this practicum was a success. The identified students learned strategies to complete and hand in homework and raise grades. Parents became more involved in their children's academics and communication between home and school

increased. The writer will be interested to see what extent these strategies carry over into the next school year. Completing homework requires a set of skills that need to be learned and become second nature to a student. The skills and discipline involved in doing homework, such as time management and organizational strategies, are important well beyond school years. The results of this practicum indicate that parents and teachers can do much to encourage and support students to assume responsibility for learning.

Recommendations

The writer would offer the following recommendations based on the practicum experience.

1. Teachers should establish homework guidelines at the beginning of the school year, and present these guidelines to parents at the earliest opportunity, such as during meet the teacher night or in a weekly newsletter. Establishing the home connection and encouraging collaboration between parent and teacher will let students know that education, and therefore homework, is important.
2. Study Club should be established by the second month of school, and participants should be limited to 10 to allow for more individual attention. As well, students who participate in Study Club should know they will attend only until their grades have improved and they have established a more organized approach to completing homework.
3. Teachers should be encouraged to offer assignment books and homework folders to all students, as this practice will establish good habits and routines that will continue throughout a student's academic and professional life.
4. Parent workshops should be offered at the beginning of the school year, perhaps in November, and again toward the end of the school year, perhaps in March. Offering workshops at two different times of the year will not only establish the importance of such workshops, but give additional opportunities for parents to attend. As well, a provision for babysitting should be considered for those parents who are not be able to come

because of lack of child care.

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Appendix A

Study Club Performance Contract

Date_____

Student_____

After discussion with _____, and his/her parent(s),_____, we agree that _____ is capable of completing the assignments required and doing the necessary work to meet homework expectations. Therefore, the following provisions will be established to help_____ meet his/her responsibilities:

_____ will be responsible for maintaining an assignment book each day.

_____ will keep this book with him/her at all times. At the end of the day, _____ will have the teacher sign it.

_____ will take the book and all assignments to Study Club.

The parents agree to meet the student at 4:30 for a progress update and to provide transportation home.

Assignments that are not completed in Study Club will be completed at home that evening and brought to school the next day. Parents will look over completed assignments and sign the assignment book.

Student progress will be reviewed at an Instructional Support Team meeting.

By signing this contract, all parties agree that the provisions stated above will assist _____ in completing and handing in assignments. It is hoped that this agreement will help maintain a regular dialogue between the home and school.

We believe that _____is capable of completing his/her work on time, therefore we will sign this contract.

_____		_____	
Student	Date	Student	Date
_____		_____	
Teacher	Date	Dr. Geosits, Principal	Date

Appendix B

Study Club Monitoring Schedule

February

8	Team member 1 - Third grade teacher 1
9	Team member 1 - Third grade teacher 2
11	Team member 1 - Fourth grade teacher 1
15	Team member 2 - Fourth grade teacher 2
16	Team member 2 - Fifth grade teacher 1
18	Team member 2 - Fifth grade teacher 2
22	Team member 3 - Third grade teacher 1
23	Team member 3 - Third grade teacher 2
25	Team member 3 - Fourth grade teacher 1

March

1	Team member 1 - Fourth grade teacher 2
2	Team member 1 - Fifth grade teacher 1
4	Team member 1 - Fifth grade teacher 2
8	Team member 2 - Third grade teacher 1
9	Team member 2 - Third grade teacher 2
11	Team member 2 - Fourth grade teacher 1
15	Team member 3 - Fourth grade teacher 2
16	Team member 3 - Fifth grade teacher 1
18	Team member 3 - Fifth grade teacher 2
22	Team member 1 - Third grade teacher 1
23	Team member 1 - Third grade teacher 2
25	Team member 1 - Fourth grade teacher 1
29	Team member 2 - Fourth grade teacher 2
30	Team member 2 - Fifth grade teacher 1

April

6	Team member 2 - Fifth grade teacher 2
8	Team member 3 - Third grade teacher 1

12	Team member 3 - Third grade teacher 2
13	Team member 3 - Fourth grade teacher 1
15	Team member 1 - Fourth grade teacher 2
19	Team member 2 - Fifth grade teacher 1
20	Team member 3 - Fifth grade teacher 2
22	Team member 1, 2, 3